

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 27, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

We write to urge you to designate Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for Afghan nationals within the United States. It is clear that, with the Taliban taking control of Kabul, the situation in Afghanistan is dire and the safety and freedom of the Afghan people remains uncertain. If we were to remand Afghan citizens in the United States back to Afghanistan, it could recklessly and inhumanly endanger the lives of those returning to Afghanistan. Given our presence in Afghanistan for over two decades, it is our moral obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the Afghan people currently within our borders.

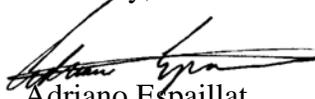
As you know, TPS is a form of statutory protection from deportation for foreign nationals in the United States whose countries of origin are experiencing temporary and extraordinary conditions such as armed conflict and natural disasters that render the country unsafe for return. TPS also grants those under its protection the ability work and contribute to the United States economy. Given the Taliban's control of Kabul, many Afghans who lived in the United States or had close relationships with the United State would be in danger if they were forced to return to Afghanistan. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of Afghan nationals in the United States, they must be permitted to remain in the country until it is safe to return to Afghanistan.

As we have seen in recent days, the people of Afghanistan are scared. Many have fled the only country they have called home. They are not only scared for their safety, but for the future of their nation. Many of the people who are currently in Afghanistan fear retribution for assisting the U.S. military and aiding in the war against the Taliban. As we continue to work on the ground to evacuate US military personnel, Afghan allies, and Afghan citizens who have been loyal to our mission in Afghanistan, we cannot send people back to a country that we ourselves have deemed unsafe to keep an embassy in.

The Afghan people have endured 20 years of cruel war. Now, they are asking for our assistance. We must take up the call and provide the necessary protections to those who reside currently within our borders. Afghans are our neighbors and coworkers. Many of those who may be poised to be deported are women who, as you know, are at dire risk of violations of their human rights. We cannot forgo our commitment to uphold respect for human rights around the globe.

We request that you designate TPS for Afghan citizens and establish a widespread campaign to notify the Afghan community of the decision and any actions that they must take to successfully apply. Given the situation in Afghanistan, we ask that this action be immediate and swift. We appreciate your time and commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the Afghan people.

Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress

Val Demings
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress